

*Young Explorers*

# **LIFE'S CLASSROOM**

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**LESSONS FROM  
THE PARABLES**

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# HOW TO USE Young Explorers

## Environmental Setting

Each Young Explorers unit is centered around an exciting theme and environment that helps the Bible lessons come alive for the children. For help in creating this unit's environment, see "Setting the Stage."



## Weekly Session Plan Sheet

Use the "Weekly Session Plan Sheet" to plan your lessons. You also can copy and hand out the sheet to your children's church workers.

## Activity Sheets

The activity sheets in the Resource section use puzzles and activities to involve children in learning.

Each sheet is marked for level of difficulty:

- One Star (☆) = easy
- Two Stars (☆☆) = somewhat difficult
- Three Stars (☆☆☆) = very difficult

Following are suggestions for using the activity sheets.

- Choose activity sheets with the right level of difficulty for each child.
- Use the sheets after each session to reinforce session goals.
- Review the answers before the children leave.

## Session Goals

The session goals describe what each child should learn during the session. The following symbol points out places in the lesson where the session goals are emphasized:



## Session Structure

Sessions are divided:

1. Explorer Orientation (opening activity, giving, and praise time)
2. Exploring Session Goals (pre-Bible lesson activities)

3. Exploring the Word (Bible lesson)

4. Responding to the Word (worship and prayer, memory verse activity)

5. Applying the Word (closing activities)

The activities in each section help children learn biblical truths by watching, listening, and participating.

You don't need to use the activities in order. You don't even need to use all the activities described. Activities can be "mixed-and-matched" to fit the needs of your group.

But use the Bible lesson, prayer time, and verse review every week.

- Pass out extra copies of the sheets for the children to take home, if there isn't sufficient time to complete them during the session.

- Send activity sheets to absent children with a note saying you missed them.

## Young Explorer Resources

Use the Resources section of each Young Explorers unit to present the lessons in a variety of learning styles. Resources include training pages, music, copy and overhead masters, game ideas, announcement and offering ideas, skits, sound effects, and activity sheets.

## Individual Attendance Chart

Print an attendance chart (in the Resources section) for each child. Let the children color their attendance

charts. Give each child a sticker to put on his attendance chart for each session he attends.

## Music and Sound Effects

### Music and Songs

Every Young Explorers unit comes with a Music CD containing several songs which relate to biblical principles covered in the unit. You'll find suggestions in each session for using the Young Explorers songs and for incorporating other familiar songs into your children's church time.

### Sound Effects

Along with the theme-related music, each Young Explorers Music CD contains sound effects which can be used with the skits (see the Resource section) or at any time during the session to capture interest or make a point.

## Bible Lessons

Along with the theme-related music, use the following suggestions to help the children understand and retain the Bible lesson better:

- Use a puppet to tell the Bible story.
- Ask one of the skit characters to tell the story.
- Gather children in a different place in the room.
- Have children ad lib role playing the Bible story as you tell it.

Anything you can do to help the children focus on the Bible lesson will help them understand and retain the lesson better.

## Copies For Helpers

Print and distribute copies of the session plans and skits for your helpers each week.

# How To Lead A Child To Christ

**S**alvation is a vital part of Children's Church. As you present the session each week, make opportunities to invite children to accept Jesus as Savior.

Following are basic steps to use when counseling children in this important area. Write the Scripture references on a card to keep in the front of your Bible.

## Invitation

The purpose of the invitation is not to coax or plead with the children, but to give them an opportunity to accept Christ as their Savior and Lord. After you present the gospel, ask the children to bow their heads. Then ask if any child would like to receive Jesus. Invite each to come to the altar. Pray with each one who comes.

## Presentation

**1.** God loves everyone and wants all to become members of His family.  
(John 3:16; 1 John 4:9)

**2.** Sin prevents us from becoming members of God's family. The Bible says all have sinned. (Ask the child if he knows he has sinned.) Help him understand that everyone has sinned.  
(Romans 3:23; James 4:17)

**3.** The punishment for sin is eternal separation from God and heaven. This is spiritual death.  
(Romans 6:23)

**4.** Jesus took our punishment by dying on the Cross.  
(Romans 5:8; 1 Peter 2:24)

**5.** Salvation is free, a gift; we cannot buy it.  
(Ephesians 2:8,9)

**6.** We need to repent (be truly sorry for) and ask forgiveness for our sins. (Help the child pray, asking God for forgiveness of his sins.)  
(Acts 3:19)

**7.** By believing in Jesus and His sacrifice for us, we receive freely the gift of salvation. (Emphasize that we accept salvation through faith, not through our feelings.) Then give thanks to God for His gift.  
(John 1:12; Acts 16:31)

**8.** Tell others you have received Jesus as your Savior.  
(Romans 10:9)

## Encourage the child to grow

as a new Christian through:

- daily Bible reading
- daily prayer
- regular church attendance
- obedience to God's commands

## Follow-up

Leading a child to Christ signals the beginning of that child's relationship with Jesus. However, just as any relationship requires work after the initial introduction, a new Christian needs to develop his relationship with Christ.

In the weeks after the child prays the sinner's prayer, talk with him about the experience. Keep encouraging him to be faithful to pray, read his Bible, and attend church. Let him know you are available to help him as he grows in his relationship with Christ.

Use the following for reference:

**A** Admit you have sinned and be sorry for your sins (Romans 3:23; Acts 3:19).

**B** Believe Jesus is God's Son who died for your sins (John 3:16).

**C** Confess your sins to Jesus, repent and ask Him to forgive you (Romans 10:9).

# Games/Object Lessons



*By Cherri Mormino and Ruth Simmons*

Children love activity! Games can be used to capture children's attention, interest them in the lesson, and help them learn biblical truths.

Since competition can be stressful for children, remind them that doing their best is more important than winning. When you choose teams, make sure the children on each team are evenly matched for age, gender, and abilities.

## Baseball Toss

Have the children sit in a circle while one child stands in the center. The child in the center should toss a ball towards someone in the circle. Whoever catches the ball should say the key verse or answer a review question, then switch places with the child in the center.

## Bible Pictionary

For this activity, use the rules from a child's Pictionary game. Divide your group into two teams. Ask a child from one team to come to the front. Secretly give that child a Bible character or subject to be drawn on the chalkboard or on an overhead transparency. Give the child 60 seconds to draw the picture without using numbers and letters. The child's team must attempt to identify the drawing. If time runs out before the correct answer is given, the other team gets one guess. The first team to guess the right answer

receives a point. Alternate between teams.

## Marching Squares

Number large paper squares and place them on the floor in a circle. Then write the same numbers on slips of paper and place the slips in a bowl.

Children should walk around the circle stepping on numbered squares while the leader plays music on a cassette or CD player. After a while, the leader should stop the music and choose a number from the bowl. The child standing on that number has to say the key verse or answer a review question.

## Scripture Puzzle Race

Write the key verse on several pieces of paper. Cut the papers into puzzle pieces. Call several children to sit at a table in front of the room and give each a scrambled puzzle. When you say "Go!" have them race to put their puzzles together. Whoever completes the puzzle first wins and should read the key verse to the class. Play several times with different children.

## Baseball Relay

Fill two sacks with baseball clothes (baseball jerseys, pants, caps, shoes, etc.). Divide your group into two teams and play this game relay-race style. Have the first child in each group put on the clothes, race to the other



side of the room, say the key verse, race back, put the clothes back in the bag, and tag the next player. Let each child play until both teams have finished.

## Verse Scramble

Write the words to the key verse on strips of paper. Scramble the word strips. Form a team with the same number of children as paper strips, then pass out one strip, facedown, to each child. Say "Go!" and let the children rush to unscramble the verse. When they are done, have them say the verse in unison. Repeat with different children. If you like, time how long each team takes to finish.

## Geo-Bible Riddles

Divide the children into two or more teams and pass out a few pieces of paper to each team. Secretly give a Bible character or Bible story to each team and send them to different parts of the room. Tell the teams to make a drawing of their character or story using only geometric shapes (triangles, squares, circles, etc.). Then select one member of a team to come forward and draw the "Geo-Bible riddle" on a chalkboard or overhead while the other teams try to guess it. One point is awarded to the first team that guesses correctly, as well as to the team that drew the picture. If no team can guess it, no teams receive any points. Give each group a chance to draw its "Geo-Bible riddle."

## Word Scramble

Select several key words or names from the

session and scramble each word. Display the words on a chalkboard or overhead sheet. (Example: JOSEPH could be HEPSJO.) Group the children into two teams and give the teams a certain amount of time (two or three minutes) to unscramble the words and write the answers on a piece of paper. The team that unscrambles the most words wins.

## Scripture Hunt

Choose a passage of Scripture that goes with the lesson. Hand out paper and pencils. On the chalkboard or overhead, list items the children should find in the passage, and give them 5 minutes to write down as many as possible. (For example, tell them to find a place mentioned, three people mentioned, commands given by God, three objects mentioned, or someone who disobeyed God.) When time is up, go over the answers.

Whoever has the most right answers wins.

## Balloon Ball

Divide your group into two teams and have the teams sit in chairs facing each other. Let the two teams volley a balloon back and forth between them, trying to keep it from touching the floor. A team gets a point when it successfully returns the balloon to the other team. A team loses a point if it allows the balloon to touch the ground. The first team to reach a pre-set score must say the key verse before being announced the winner.

# Games/Object Lessons



Children love activity! Whether you have a small or large group, games can add excitement and give the children a break in an otherwise non-physical morning. Meet this challenge by using children's natural love for activity to review the session concepts or to memorize and understand the key verse.

Encourage the children to display sportsmanlike conduct at all times. Competition can be stressful for young children, so downplay the competitive aspect of games and promote the importance of each child's doing his or her best. When playing team games, try to make teams evenly matched—physically, mentally, socially, gender, etc.

When church runs long, fill the gap with one of the games below, or use them in review activities. We hope these will be adaptable to your church size and budget.

## Nerf Ball Toss

Have children stand or sit in a circle. The leader stands in the middle and tosses a Nerf® ball to a child. The child catching the ball must say the key verse or answer a review question. After answering, the child exchanges places with the leader and tosses the ball to another child who will say the verse or answer a question.

If you don't have a Nerf® ball, any small item that won't hurt a child can be used.

## Bible Pictionary

This game is played using the rules from a

child's Pictionary® game. If you do not have one of these games, use a 60-second egg timer or your watch to time each child. Select two teams.

Ask one child from a team to come to the front. Secretly give that child a Bible character or subject that can be drawn on the chalkboard or on an overhead transparency. Have him draw that character or subject. (He cannot use numbers or proper names in his drawings.) Let that child's team take turns trying to guess the object or person drawn. When the timer runs out, the opposing team gets one guess. The team with the first correct answer receives the point. Alternate between teams.

## Marching Squares

Place numbered construction paper squares on the floor in a large circle. Number slips of paper to correspond to the numbers on the floor and put them in a bowl. Children walk around the circle stepping on numbered squares while the leader plays marching music on a cassette player. When the leader stops the music, he picks a number from the bowl. The player standing on that number must say the key verse or answer a question related to the lesson.

## Half And Half

Write out on slips of paper several Bible verses related to the lesson. You might use key verses for the quarter as a review. Cut



each verse in half. Give each child half a verse and have the child find the person with the other half of his verse. When all children have found a partner, let each pair read their verse aloud to the group.

## Bible Bingo

You will need sheets of paper divided into 25 squares (five across and five down) with the word B-I-B-L-E printed across the top. Print 24 lesson-related words (names, places, Bible references, key words, etc.) on the chalkboard. Instruct children to write the words in random order, one word for each square, on their papers. The square in the center is a free space. Give children buttons, pennies, or small candies to cover squares. Write all the words on slips of paper and put in a small box. In another small box write the letters B-I-B-L-E on slips of paper. Pick a slip from the letter box and a slip from the word box and read them aloud. (Note: when reading the letter B, children may cover either space. The first child to cover a whole row diagonally, horizontally, or vertically should say, "Bible Bingo." Then have him quote the key verse.

## Scripture Puzzle Scramble

Write the key verse on several pieces of heavy paper. Cut the papers into puzzle pieces. Give two or three children scrambled puzzles. When you say "Go" have the children race to put the puzzles together. The child who completes the puzzle first is the winner. Then have the child read the key verse to the group. Give several children opportunity to race to put puzzles together and say the key verse.

## Hurdle Jump Relay

Use masking tape to mark a starting and finish line. Place boxes in between the lines for children to jump over during the relay race. Divide the group into teams and play this game relay-race style. Have the first child in each group run and jump over the hurdles to the finish line, say the key verse, then run and jump the hurdles back to the starting line, and tag the next player. Play until each team has finished.

## Yarn Toss

Seat the children in a large circle. Hold a ball of yarn and ask the person who has the yarn to share something from today's Bible lesson (how I can please God, something I am thankful for, etc.), hook the strand of yarn around his wrist, and throw the ball to someone else in the circle. When everyone has had the ball, have the children look at the yarn design. Talk about how each person is important in creating the finished design just as each believer is important in the church.

## Scripture Hunt

Choose a portion of Scripture that goes with the lesson. Children can work individually or in small groups. Give each child or group paper and pencils. List on the chalkboard items the children can find in the passage. Have them try to find as many as they can within 5 minutes. Examples: Find a place mentioned. Find three people mentioned. Find a direction given by God. Find three objects mentioned. Find someone who disobeyed God. After the time is up, review the answers.

# Training

## EFFECTIVE STORYTELLING

By Lorraine Mastrorio

**W**hat is a story? Before we define what a story is, let's define what a story isn't. A story is not a report of information, not a series of descriptions, nor a vehicle for exhortation, nor a haphazard relating of characters—their decisions and actions. A story is a narrative of true or imaginary persons and events that form a vitally related whole, so presented as to arouse and sustain interest until the conflict reaches a satisfactory conclusion. In Children's Church, the stories are true accounts from the Bible or valuable life-application stories.

Two mistakes leaders may make in preparing and presenting a Bible lesson are to assume the children already know the outcome of the Bible account and to neglect to make the story "theirs." This means storytellers tell the account exactly as it is written in the leader's guide without any personal research. They often tell the Bible account or life-application story with no preparation at all.

What are some ways to better prepare and present a Bible account or life-application story? First, recognize a story must have suspense to captivate and sustain children's imagination and interest. The following

preparation method will result in immediate improvement in dramatic presentation.

Begin to make the account "yours" by reading it through twice. Then read the Bible passage from two different translations, noticing interesting details. Think about the account. How does it relate to the session's objective? What do I want to say with the story? How can I make its characters more vivid? How does the plot/action begin, then accelerate? What are the transitions between events? How powerful is the climax? How does the account end?

Then record your presentation, reading aloud the Bible account as it appears in the Leader Guide. Now listen to yourself. On scratch paper answer these questions: Where did I pause? Why? What emotions did my voice communicate? How did I help build suspense toward the climax? Was my pace clear and deliberate? Did the conclusion tie in all the loose ends? From this evaluation, you will probably discover you need more practice before the story is really "yours."

Now do some research using a Bible dictionary, atlas, or handbook. Find out more about the actual setting of the Bible account. Note facts that enhance the sight, sound,



smell, taste, and feeling of the story. Stick to the facts so as not to embellish a Bible account. For example, if the account is from Matthew 8 about Jesus' calming the storm, jot down facts about the Sea of Galilee, typical fishing boats of that time, and kinds of fish usually caught. Add plausible insight like how the fish might have tasted when cooked on an open fire or how water was bailed from a sinking boat.

Record the account a second time; only this time make the story really "yours." Remember the opening of a story should be like the shot of a gun for a race. It gets things going right away, but it does not give away the ending. Listeners are won or lost within the first minute.

Follow along with the guide, but insert your researched details in action-packed sentences. Pretend the children are in front of you. Get involved in the action and bring the children along. Vary your voice to interpret the characters and their actions.

Play the recording. You may want to make index cards to help you recall details, write notes in the margin of the leader's guide, or just make mental notes. Whether you prac-

tice more or not, from now on this particular account will always be "yours" when you tell it.

In the actual presentation during Children's Church, ask God's blessing. You must be reverent in presenting the account as God's Word, but you can still be humorous. Be sincere by showing you know the account and you believe it. Be imaginative because children "see" stories more than they hear stories. Be wholehearted or else the story is not worth your telling it. Be yourself because you're best at it.

Be sure the children understand the "listening rules." Arrange the seats in semicircles close enough to you so each child can clearly see and hear you. Establish a sense of intimacy while telling the account by making eye contact with each child, by mentioning a child's name, by asking for brief responses or repeating interesting words or phrases. Read the children's faces and adjust your tone of voice or pace to accommodate their attention span. Let your face reflect your words and your heart. The more "alive" you make the Bible account, the more likely the children are to understand it and remember it.